

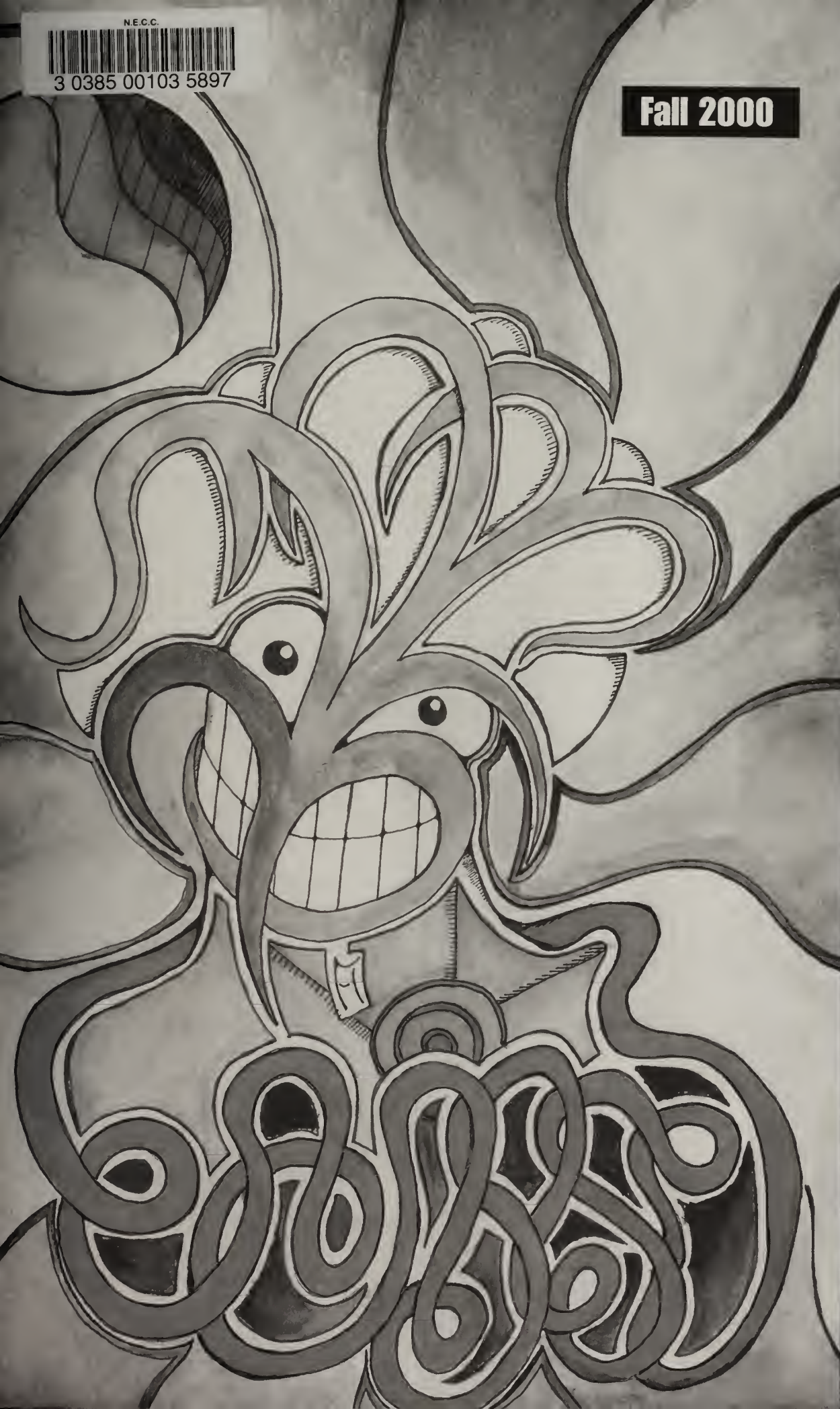
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Fall 2000

PAPERZAZZUS





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Parnassus

Inter-Arts Magazine
of Northern Essex Community College
Haverhill, Massachusetts 01830

Parnassus is the name of the
mythological mountain home of the
nine muses who inspired humankind
in the arts.

The policy of the editorial staff has been to select material for the magazine democratically.

We have read each work submitted and viewed all artwork.

We voted to determine eligibility: a majority vote for a piece meant publication.

Parnassus provides an opportunity for new artists and writers to reach others;
it's a showcase of Northern Essex Community College student creativity.

Parnassus Profile

Chuck Lyle

Cover artist Chuck Lyle creates wonderful images that, as he says, "usually start out as doodles." Working in his favorite media, pen and paint, he draws inspiration from artists like Salvador Dali, H. R. Geiger, and Peter Maxx, whose influence can be seen in the colorful psychedelics of the original cover pieces. Chuck's artwork also has links to the world of mythology and its subjects, such as dragons and unicorns. "Nature and the emotions," he says, also play an important role in his work. After graduating from NECC, Chuck plans to get a Bachelor's Degree in graphic design and join a design firm.





Kelley-Jaye Rosberg

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It has taken me till now to realize that as we look back on our own lives, all we truly remember are the bits and pieces that have somehow stood out among the rest. I can not remember what I did on a Monday two weeks ago, or what occurred around that dinner table, or even a conversation I had that day. The past becomes a blur, the years slipping by, leaving only an echo of what went on day to day. I bet that when a life-threatening situation erupts and they say your whole life flashes before your eyes, it is these bits and pieces that we see. They stand out and are remembered because they touched us in some way; good or bad, they have made their mark on our soul and have become a part of who we are.

I wonder where the rest goes. I envision it floating off into some cosmic existence, perhaps to live among the clouds, which explains why I feel right at home when I look out an airplane window at the white carpet that hangs suspended there. Maybe it's because lost parts of myself reside within the fluffy folds, separated from me only by the thick glass of my little window. When I look out on the clouds, which appear strong enough to walk upon, it is as if I have entered another world, one where anything is possible. One where I would prefer to live.

I realize when I lost these memories, I lost intricate pieces of myself. Forgotten are things I used to do that made me feel joy, that made me uniquely me. I discovered this when I started running each day with my neighbor, Alexandra. She liked the idea of this joint effort but when it came to actually doing it, she hated it. She would jokingly complain most of the way, but in contrast I enjoyed it. In fact I kept doing it even after she had given it up, once the novelty wore completely away. I began using the tread mill at the gym and found I really liked that, a controlled climate and a TV right above me. My mother thought it was strange, my friends thought I was going through some weird change of life, everybody thought I wasn't acting like myself. They said this to me... "This is so not like you." I thought about this too,

long and hard, wondering why I suddenly got such release from an activity that most avoid. One day it came to me as I was running, a memory, a lost bit that had once felt insignificant enough to leave me to go to that cosmic void. It felt needed again, important enough to return and answer my questions. I suddenly remembered myself in the fifth grade, running in a relay in our school's yearly June Olympics. I saw the first runner cross the finish line with me right behind him. I felt the heat of the burning sun, the sweat running down my face as I gasped for breath amongst the cheers of classmates. I saw the red ribbon I received, bright red and made of satin with gold embossed lettering. There was a gold pin in the back in order to pin it on, but I preferred to hold it in my hands, feeling its glory between my fingertips.

The feeling of success from that moment washed over me again. I saw the race where the baton gets passed from runner to runner. I saw myself being chosen by my team, confidence in me beaming from their own perspiring faces. The air



Bona Kang

was hot and lightly fragrant from the tall pine trees that grew around the outskirts of the track. Between events you could go and sit under them and feel the coolness their shade offered, watching the other events from the comfort of your pine-needled seat. I felt so much a part of something, so confident and...happy.

Our whole team won blue ribbons for that race. I felt successful and heroic, rewarded for something that came naturally to me. Those are the truly meaningful honors in life, when praise is given for something that comes naturally to you. It is, in reality, a celebration of you, a ribbon that says what you are...who you are, is worthy of such meaningful recognition. All the other rewards in life are just challenges met, goals obtained. Most of the time they have nothing to do with who truly lives beneath the skin.

I had kept those ribbons in my tiny jewelry box, made for me by my grandfather's hands, protecting them from dust and time. So many years have passed. I wish I knew where those ribbons were now. I long to take them out and read my name written on the back, no doubt in beautiful handwriting that only teachers possess.

I gather these pieces of memories that have made their way back to me, and add them to the puzzle that I have become. I am one of those giant puzzles with a million pieces, and key pieces are missing. I stand looking over my fragmented self, scratching my head and saying "Jeez, I am never going to put this thing together." I feel so elated when a missing piece is found, one little piece. As if that will solve the mystery of what the puzzle is all about. In reality, it only makes clear one little section, not a big help, really at all.

Barbara Polletta

Carol L'Italien
after Betty Edwards copy
of a sixteenth-century
drawing by an unknown
german artist.





The Rose Garden

She walks backward through the garden with her eyes closed, shifting in her pace indifferent to her path. Her long hair blows about her lovely face. She picks petals off full bloomed roses that rise so high she needn't bend to reach them. She's pleased to be here but miserable to be living. Her heart screams a bloody pain redder than the roses before her. With a tear in her eye she keeps her blind pace ever knowing where it will end.

Distraught in the direction of her existence she decides to make this last decision hers alone.

Strange, a beautiful garden of roses set so high above everything and everybody, undisturbed and innocent. She picked this promontory because of its solitude and the merciless rocks below kept cold by the ocean. "Washed away like my love so shall my life be," she whispers to herself. She can hear the tumult of the ocean as it invades its rocky terrain. She wonders how it can sound so close being so far away. Her wondering ceases as her foot finds the edge. She knows her next step will end her life. She brings both feet to the edge. With slight hesitation and a deep breath drawn she opens her eyes to view the beautiful garden as she pushes herself backward with all her might.

The air is littered with rose petals and it brings a smile to her face. The petals seem everywhere as she falls. Freely she lets herself fly without fight or scream. She watches the petals dance in the wind as they follow her down. The feeling as becoming as light as the petals calm her more than any words or false reassurances ever had. She closes her eyes and floats in the wind. The image of the garden and dancing petals are burned in her mind. She realizes it is the last thing she'll know and she is not saddened.

Ken Samoisette

"The Curse" **(additional scene)**

Mitchell laid his head on the kitchen table as his wife calmed him with the gentle strokes of her hand. He closed his eyes and began to drift into a deep sleep that explored the true depth of what he had experienced. His mind began to review the event over and over, exploring every possible action that he could have, would have, and knew he should have taken. Mitchell knew he was not a strapping young man with broad shoulders and a tree cutter's forearms. He was not a Yeoman by any means, yet still he reviewed. He did not review what he could have done with the advantage of pure physical prowess, for he knew he had none. He did not stand a chance against those snow-blinded youths. What he knew he did have over those boys, was his wisdom. Mitchell had gotten out of many a jam in his forty plus years on this earth, and he knew that this jam could have been dealt with also.

He began to explore every alternate course of action that existed in that small cozy bar. He knew that there were things he could have done. There were things he might have done, he thought to himself, with a brow raised and a cringe on his face. His wife began to wipe a cold face cloth over his forehead, which was now beaded with sweat. She could see that he was in such agony over this night, she could see it in his lid-covered eyes. The kids had laughed many times when the dog had moved about in its sleep in such a fashion, but the kids weren't laughing now, and she knew this was no dream. Mitchell had lived this nightmare and didn't get out of it in good mind. She knew this was going to be an ongoing thing, night after night, tossing and turning until he came to a truce with his conscience. He was so sorry that he couldn't help her, he wanted to cradle the girl in his arms like a child. And that's just what his wife did, as she feared he'd never wake up.

Anonymous

Christie Gymziac



PARMASSUS fall 2000

The sun sets. It takes all of its warmth and illumination with it. As the dusk fades into evening, the sky turns black and the animals of the forest retreat into their homes.

Parents call their children in, then they lock the doors to keep the darkness away from their loved ones. They hide under their blankets and close their eyes to escape to an alternate reality. One that will assuage their fears and cradle them from the darkness until the sun rises anew.

The moon hovers in the sky like a pale lord looking over his shadowed kingdom. The unseen creatures sing their reverence of him with chirps, hisses, and hoots. The howling of the wolves, and their cousins the coyotes, provide an eerie harmony to the decadent hymn. The parks and alleyways become the domain of thieves and murderers. One puts his life into a stranger's hands for walking where children laughed and played only hours before.

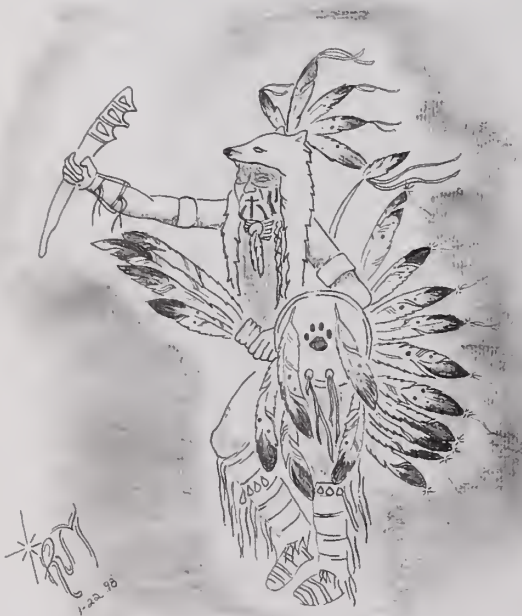
While others flee from the darkness that befalls their homes, I walk freely about. The blood chilling, nefarious hymns that the creatures sing are nothing but passing songs to me. The ominous shadows that skulk in corners waiting for an innocent soul to prey upon sit idly by as I pass. The pale, black-hearted master of this nocturnal depravity turns the other way when I approach.

I am not one of those whom roam about when the sky is black. I am not one of the legions that ply their trades under the concealment of shadows. Those treacherous cutthroats leave me in peace because I'm not devoured by the darkness. When I look into their eyes and stare into their souls, they realize that their murky camouflage is transparent to me.

I fear nothing that lies in the shades of night. For even though the sun has dropped below the horizon, I can continue along my path unabated by that which strikes fear in others. Even though all is dark and there is no warmth available to combat the sinister icy wind that seeks to slice through you and freeze your blood, my way is illuminated and my heart is warmed by my Evening Sunshine.

She holds me close to shield me from the buffeting winds, and whispers guidance and support in my ear to keep the dark music from fouling the heart that belongs to her. The pale lord of darkness is held at bat by her love as it engulfs me in its sweet, tender brilliance.

Patrick McAndrew



Rob Mendoza



Kara Petrucci

Desperation

I gazed lazily at the scenery out of the window- a small, insignificant creek etched its way up a significant mountain surrounded by the green pines, orange bushes and yellow grass of late autumn. My relaxed body tensed as I sensed a tremor-then came the cataclysm. My fragile bungalow disintegrated as my ears were shattered by a fierce detonation and the thunder of the earth's heart being torn apart. Then it hit me-a fierce bulge of fire-laden earth rose under my feet. I fought to stand, and the horror submerged me as I realized that for the first time in my life I was alone- completely and utterly alone. The autumnal bushes and trees appeared to shoot off of the mountain's side followed by streams of magma. As the earth was racked with spasms of pain, the once-quiet creek disappeared into shifting quicksand. The more I looked, the more complicated the scenery appeared, and I must say "appeared", for the anchors of security and judgement were fast slipping from under me, and I was left on no platform on which to stand but was bodily thrown, a corpse, to fall and rise with the toss and heave of the boiling quicksand.

Anonymous

Sloth

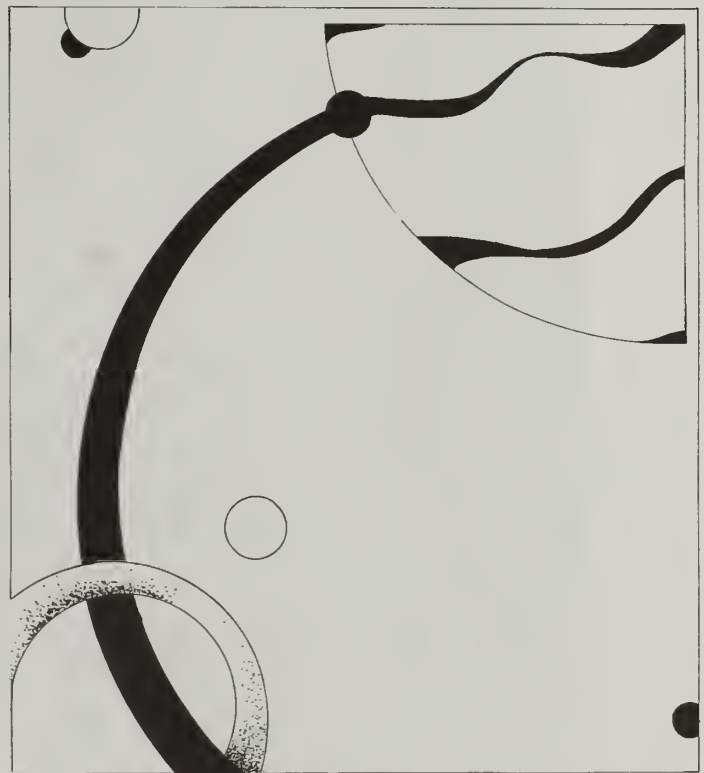
11:30 i awoke to the melancholy bells of
a passing ice cream truck
in its disregarded sadness
rang the slow death of
one man's dreams
i retreated to the false
comforts of a cigarette
and wondered what it
takes to survive

shivering beneath the weight
bus stop madness
aging
learned humility
playground education
captured
then striking back
experimental chemical therapy
dying
yellowed nostalgia
as it was in the beginning
it is now and ever
shall be

speech,
murdering thought
centuries of human condition
screaming in bloody accord
battered by a willful attempt
to convey emotion
discontent
to conserve words
and seek silence

Dan Copeland

Allison Asselin



Halves

two stumbling semicircles
search for the perfect fit
desperate to roll through the
peaks and valleys of togetherness

longing for oneness
the other half of themselves
instead of the constant barrage
of almos^ts and apologies

one hundred false starts
may not be half enough but
the failures are endured with the
grim determination of the lonely

assured in their endeavors
they hurl themselves into the wheel

Dan Copeland

Will the killer please stand
Allow him to pass
Make your way to the front
Quickly, at last

You'll pay for your crimes
For your malice, your sin
Your capture uneasy
You boasted you'd win

But now

Shackled and bound
Before us you appear
"Guilty as charged
By a jury of peers

Prepare us the gallows!
You commoners, you slaves
Gather round and witness
The events to be played

Speak now if you must
Any words you lust
Any statement that pertains
To your life lived in vain

Last chance prepare the noose
Tighter not loose
We want the neck to break
Or rather slow suffer, suffocate

To us it matters not
You'll swing till you die
No words you could find
Could change crowds who deride

His silence seals his fate
No longer will we wait
Hangman prepare your part
As we ready to depart

From this life
This fiend will leave
Ready One..., Two...
Three...

WAIT!

If you must know
If you will listen
I'll kindly bestow
My final disposition

I have something to explain
To you masses, listen now
Hear how it was my brain
That caused me this pain

I've nothing to hide
No tears inside
The voices in my head
Three of them being said

Darest thou laugh at me!
Buffoons
And you say I'm the animal you see
My suffering internally mocked by three

But alas the story you crave
The history of my depravity
I killed and I maimed
I'm proud to exclaim

The victims they cried
Suffered as they died
I'm prepared to swing
Looking forward to the fling

One thing I say to you
Clear and true
Fuck you
Good bye

I've no mercy for you swines
I selected each like fine wine
Savored and swirled
'Twas only life I stole

Silence you cry
Would you like to hear
Of a little lullaby
To ease your minds

A deed that I need
To get off my chest
To share with you
Before I'm laid to rest
A young blossom
Old enough to sprout hair
Not for the sex
I can't stand that hex

Don't you understand
Its not what's between her thighs
But for being she
Was her curse
I had to slit her throat
It was easy
Hidden beneath my coat
Not even the blood makes me queasy

Nothing but a whore
Her behavior
Misplaced rapture
Her presence disgustingly poor

She lost her life
The moment she lost her respect
For this I'm condemned
The irony of your men

To your face they love
Behind your back they run
Philanderers them all
Sentenced by their sin

For this I murdered without remorse
So if your husband hasn't been home
Don't look for him
For I've murdered men as well
All deserving and vile
As the cunting whore
Without morals

My work will go on
For I've taught how to hate
To seek out false love
And judge their fate

So as long as there's you
There will be me
Your suffering makes me be

I told of the voices in my head
Each one inbred
All shouting the same
Leave this world in flames

So each victim I burned
As a heretic gets learned
The flames off a sinner intoxicating and vibrant
The smell inexplicable, the sight magnificent

But I've crowed enough
I'm beginning to bore
Set me free
I'd like to kill some more

Hurry! Do what you must
This justice you trust
What I represent will never die
I see it now in some of your eyes

Hangman throw your switch
Who's beneath that hood? A bitch?
If it is you know what I'd do to you
First I'd — AAGGH

His neck didn't break
Watch him shake
Jesus Christ his eye
Popped clear into the sky

Won't this wretch die
He's been hanging some time
Finally his last twitch
Time of death 9:46

Cut him down leave him bound

Throw him in the pit
Until next time
Remember what you've seen
The next time could be thee!

Ken Samoisette

Sickness descends on me,
Then the stark aguey kiss,
Slithering its terrible
Malaria deeper and further,
Into the center of my body.

Bloody inextirpable flesh and bone
Paralyzed by thick gravity.
Bottle in which I'm trapped!
A fever, the flu,
What is this?

Seven days, seven nights,
The Universe's roll of the dice,
Distorting its way into insanity.
I am none the wiser!
We may have merged, though;

You, still licking the kisses
From pictures of the past,
Interminably affixed to their hidden meaning.
And I, running into the beauty
That opens the blinds

That peer past years lingering in
Dried out river-banks,
Let slip from beneath the golden arcs
Of wheels that move,
The memories that haunt us— Post-traumatic!

And seeing that the glass was shattered,
Let flow the blood that runs suicidal,
Crickets and morning dew will wash away
The year's unsmiling.
My legs grow heavy as a eunuch's libido.

My mind blank as a new canvas,
My body, at the same time, hot, cold, hot, cold.
I didn't want you; I didn't want you at all,
Nevertheless, Nevertheless the thoughts keep
Manifesting to all the corners of my mind.

I'm stunned yet frightened I'll slip and
Anchor into the deep cauldron
Of all those memories.
Stale air— Humidity ripping through my pores,
The heat dries me out so bad, I feel faint.

Are you there still?
Does my intensity not amaze you? Or my fire—
All by myself, I am an enormous volcano
Creating, exploding, and erupting passion.
Cataclysmically shaking the world like Thor.

But I am too much for you or anyone.
Your love hurts me like
The world destroys our planet.
I am a chandelier—
My body a porcelain statue,

My platinum skin infinitely exquisite
And amazingly ageless,
I am pure as a cherub,
Growing, glowing, and going,
Blushing innocence on the globe.

The dead carcass left in the shadows
Behind the fall of Icarus.
I think I am ascending.
I think I will fly,
The beads of sick sweat roll from my eyes

And I, love, I
Am a luculent God of Fire.
Surrounded by attendants
Drowning me in the heat of all this light,
Enmeshed by a whirlwind of eternal love,

And not you, nor I,
The turning of the tides,
My selves integrating,
Old fugues and dissociations lost,
Lost in the Kingdom of Paradise.

Eric S. Perkins



My grave

Do not stand at my grave to weep for I'm not there, I do not sleep.

I'm the diamond glint on snow.

When you awake in the morning's hush I'm the soft uplifting rush of lovely
Birds in circled flight.

I'm the star that shines on you at night.

While you walk on the beach's sands I'm there to hold your hand.

No matter where you go I will always be there with you in some way.

When you hear the wind softly blow,

that is letting you know:

Do not stand at my grave to cry. I'm not there. I did not die.

Robyn D.



Natalie Smith

Shocked

Bloody, bruised, raped, and pounding on Death's door
she breathes inconsistently
as I try to make out her painful whispers.
Stunned, I try to cover her open wounds
forgetting the repercussions of the HIV virus
feeding on her weak molested body.
Tears break loose from their prison
and I cry for her
because she can't cry for herself anymore.
She reaches for my hand
as her crimson blood spoils the sky blue rug
and I pull away.
Mama, what would you do...how do I help her?
God, help her—can you hear me?
As she slowly dies
he runs for his life,
and all I can do—
the only thing I know how to do,
is just stand.

Angela Hartmann

Misunderstood

Obsessed by the alluring call of tragedy,
You dawdle and gaze as though
The world's suffering were your own,
Or as if some indignity, at any moment,
Might seep from a filth-ridden sewer
Into the corners of your world.

No great calamities inflicted you in life,
No death warrants from Hades,
Or Heads on Platters have served you time,
Nevertheless you ply through the world,
Crying, with the despondence of Oedipus
After the discovery of true self.

Iocaste in a green velvet gown,
Still carries with her, to this very day,
The burden of her debauched mistake.
Untouched, even by the filth of the Earth's dirt,
You kick your way into convulsions,
Knocking over the pillars of knowledge,

Burrowed deep in the hollow of your skull.

Eric S. Perkins

Leaf-papered sidewalks

The city where I live is not a city with the thrill of a city.

It has not the dignity of NY or Boston.

There are a few great buildings, and a pretty park,

but they are not enough to compensate for the now-empty stores,
reverberating with the hollowness of a miscarried womb.

They are not enough to compensate for the trash filled gutters,

or the ghoulish factory buildings glowering over smoky, crowded roads.

They are not enough to compensate for the impoverished river being dammed up and
conveyed in stagnated concrete channels.

They are not enough to alleviate the agony of the tress growing up compressed between
buildings, their roots breaking sidewalks in the nearly futile search for fertile soil.

Escape.

That is why I leave the city-That is why I pay with hours of my time every day-To escape.

I revel in bliss on the gorgeous turf.

I escape to a place

where the lakes lie in undisturbed glory and the rivers rush with the joy of life.

To a place

where the trees cohabitate with the buildings in happy agreement,

Where the long, leaf-papered sidewalks compensate for the sterile tile halls inside.

And so I come every day

to take a deep breath of God's great world....

And then I go home

Rose Elliott

Maiko Tomatsu

PARNASSUS fall 2000



Barbara Polletta



Unblocked

The moonlight glistens over the naked trees, piercing the ground,
A shadow falls over the rocks, the night air whispers against the hills,
Only time stands between us, Alone we fall into each other's hearts,
Never again was there found before, a force as strong as this, in this night,
As stars peek out of the black void, the crickets begin their symphonies,
And so it begins again as before, a chance that started in the beginning,
But now, there's just a little more.

Rebekah Simpson



Barbara Polletta

El Pecado Original

•
•
•

Un día en el pasado
Al igual que hoy presente
Se cometió un gran pecado
Por culpa de estas dos gentes.

•
•

Una vez que la serpiente
Tomo a ella en sus manos
Quedamos para siempre
Condenados los humanos.

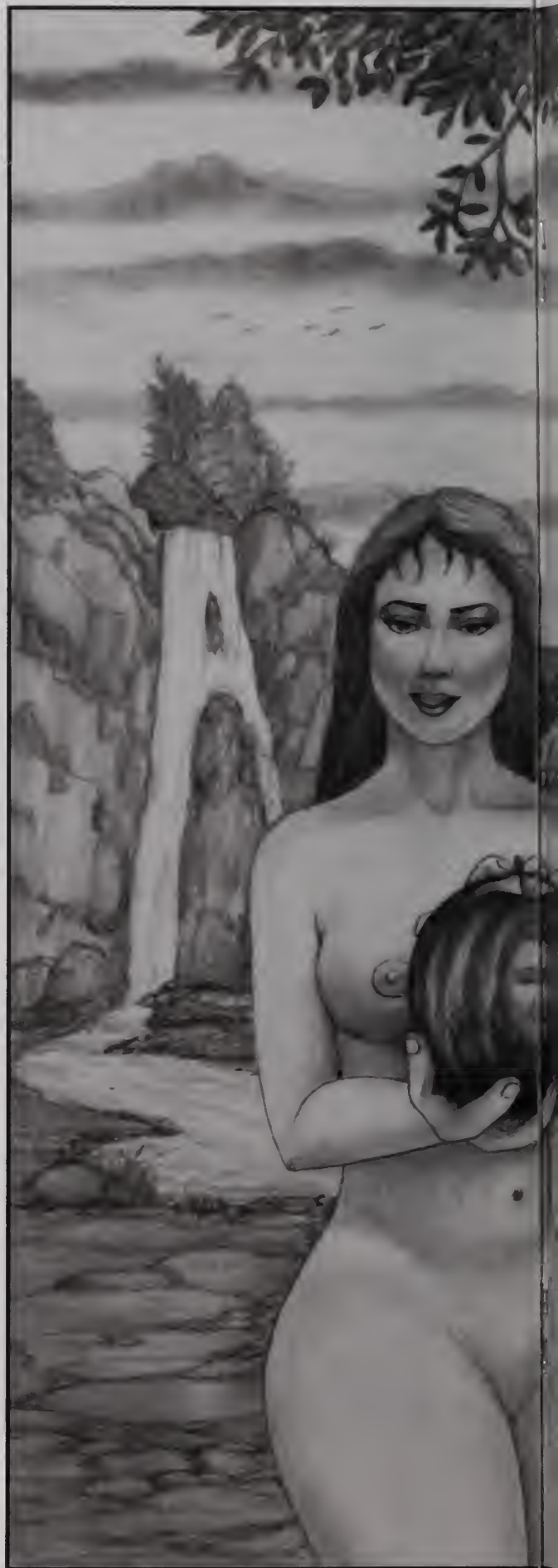
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En la mirada del hombre
Podemos todos apreciar
La inocencia y la malicia
Como queiriendo pelear.

•
•

En este mundo señores
Lleno de tanta maldad
Tratemos de ser mejores
Y por lo menos vivir en paz.

Eugenio A. Torres





Eugenio A. Torres

The Old Neighborhood

Johnny Ricco

Our neighborhood consisted of wooden two and three-family homes mixed with red-brick apartment blocks, and a few stores, located in the Dorchester section of Boston. Our neighbors were a mixture of second generation Irish, Italians, Jews, Poles, and a few respectable families of Protestant English. It was a clean neighborhood of mothers sweeping sidewalks in the morning, and rugs shaken out of windows each day.

Families struggled in this late Depression era: a few with steady jobs owned cars, many struggled to find jobs, many received public assistance, everyone struggled to pay rent and put food on the table. Everyone knew each other's business, especially in the summer with windows open. Neighbors knew when neighbors had serious money problems, or when a son or daughter got in trouble.

In those days the sick died at home, and their mortal remains were waked in the family living room. Doctors still ministered the sick at home; having to go to a doctor or a hospital could ruin a family financially. Clothes were handed down from the oldest to the youngest, and then passed on to cousins.

But people accepted their lot in life, not expecting to do much better in the future. Some had dreams and aspirations, but for most they dreamed only of a steady job. Sending a kid to college was not a reality; sending a twelve-year old youngster to the State House for a work permit was a way of life. So people just lived their daily lives.

Some recollections are sad, but there was a code of living together, of helping and taking care of each other, of trust and honesty. Some recollections are of happy times. Now take the incident with Johnny Ricco.

The Riccos rented the third-floor apartment

to a police officer and his young wife. Mr. Ricco was happy to have the policeman who earned \$20 a week, and who would pay the rent on time every month. The policeman was a respected person in the community, for a while.

Problems began when the policeman ran off neighborhood kids playing baseball in a vacant lot, behind a small factory. He claimed the noise bothered his wife. The games were moved to a ballfield in another neighborhood and caused several fights between rival gangs. So, not everybody obeyed the policeman's rule.

John Ricco, the landlord's son, and myself were with friends one evening, playing ball in the vacant lot. We were all involved in the game when



Tim Fichera

a police car pulled onto the lot. We scrambled in all directions. John Ricco and myself were caught by two policemen. One of the policemen lived in Ricco's house. He did not recognize John Ricco.

During these times the police did not arrest

"JUSTICE WAS ADMINISTERED
BY 'GETTING YOUR ASS KICKED'
BY THE COPS..."

kids for simple problems like vandalism, or loitering on a corner. Justice was administered by 'getting your ass kicked' by the cops at some remote location.

As we returned home, battered and bruised, John vowed vengeance on the policeman; we both talked about getting even. I didn't think it was possible though, only boys' talk.

Around the same time we became aware of biological changes and interest in girls. Nobody knew anything about girls, and we learned about sex from dirty jokes told by older kids, who didn't know much either.

Oh, we smooched with girls at parties, but typically, neither partner knew what came next. No boy seemed to be attracted to any girl, and vice versa.

As we pondered the subject of girls, John Ricco seemed to develop a better understanding of the subject. He confirmed rumors of the birth process, and how babies were made. And when pushed he could describe the secrets of the female parts. We were lucky to have John Ricco; nobody asked how he gained this wealth of knowledge, until the rumors started.

Several of the neighborhood boys had been

invited to do chores by the policeman's wife. They washed floors, scrubbed walls, or moved furniture. Some were paid with cash, others...

Being the landlord's son, John Ricco worked as a regular in the policeman's apartment - on days the policeman worked.

Then the word got around, first among the neighborhood kids, and then one or two parents. Some kids who visited regularly stopped when the rumours got started, but not my John.

One night while John was visiting the policeman's apartment, his father came stomping up the front stairs, yelling, "Johnny Ricco, you little sonofa bitch."

Johnny's father had heard the rumors, and realized his son was involved.

Terrified, and pulling his pants up, Johnny ran out the rear door onto a porch. While in the process of climbing over the porch rail, his father stormed through the apartment, past a woman struggling with her underwear.

John hung by his fingertips three floors above a rear yard. When his father saw the hands gripping the rail, he swung a length of 1/2-inch dowel he carried to punish his children. John screamed as his grip loosened and he fell to the yard. His father ran down the rear stairs swearing in Italian.

John Ricco, while healing, spent a lot of time with Father Gibson; the policeman and his wife moved.

Leo Doherty



Janet Lavigne

Response to Our Town

I know that soon I will slip back into blindness
But I have been to the brink of eternity
And frightened to death.
I grasp at my mother, hold on to my father
Whispering, groaning
Crying out to my brothers
I love you.
With my feeble five senses and all of my weak little heart
I love you.
I will always love you.
My mother says with tears in her eyes, I will look at you more often

We walk in the empty hall, boxed in by the walls
Tears streaming down my face.
The moisture on trees, grass, sidewalk, heavy black air
Is nothing to the moisture on my face.

I wipe away the moisture on the inside of the car's window
To see the graves more clearly
As we drive past
Temporarily fleeing mortality and pain.
Hoping for life eternal.

Rose Elliott

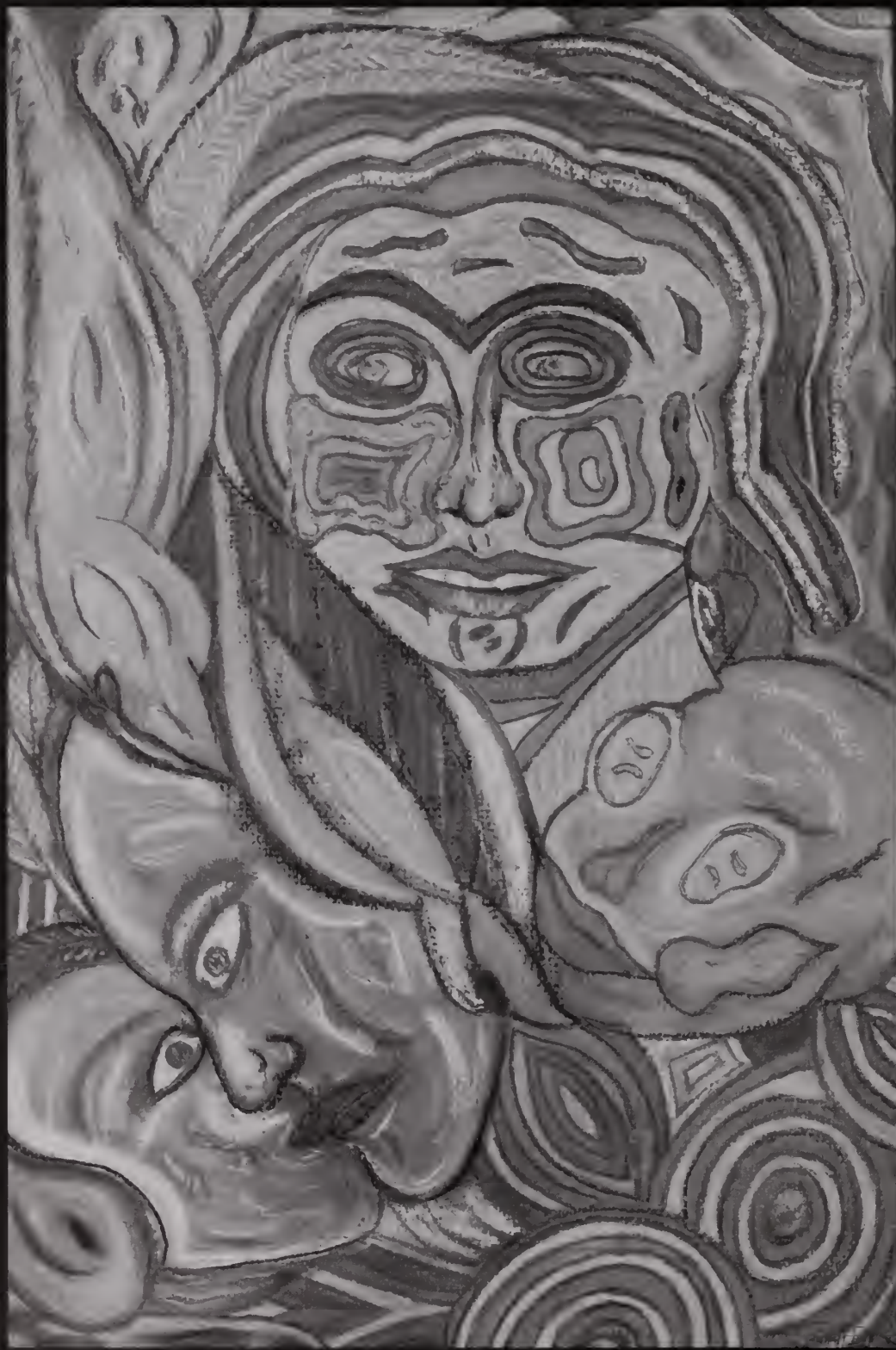
Untitled

Pink clouds over me, Pink flowers under me,
Pink sunset around me, Pink lipstick on his collar.

Rebekah Simpson



April Challinor



Eric S. Perkins

Jones and Cucina had a thing for going to the cheap theatres in the scary part of New Orleans - East New Orleans to be exact.

The Meadowbrook Theatre sounds innocuous enough and the movies are first run and only 99 cents!

These film junkies just can't resist.

Usually they only go in the daytime to cut down on the danger of being in East New Orleans, but tonight that new Pacino movie is opening and they can't help themselves.

The theatre is well lit and there are plenty of security guards sprinkled around the pinball strewn lobby. The stink of hydrogenated popcorn grease and questionable janitorial diligence is something they come to expect and don't really mind because — you can't beat that price.

As the morbidly obese couple maneuver their way through the third world languages and overly vivid peoples to their seats, they realize two things:

They are the largest Latinos in the theatre and it's only half full.

This seems unusual to them because it is a Saturday night and the moon is full — not to mention that it's the opening of "Carlito's Way". They expected this ethnic gangster treatment to be packed.

Jones always makes Cucina sit too close. Tonight is no different.

They break out their smuggled goodies.

Cucina slaps the mustard on the buns that will soon be filled with the weenies that Jones is secretly char-grilling over his Bic lighter. That's the main reason he likes to sit near the front — so less people will see their dirty little secret.

They have four empty rows in front of them and several empty behind.

The Pacino vehicle rolls along predictably enough and just as it's working its way up to a bloody crescendo, 10 to 15 gang-color-clad teen

thugs saunter loudly down to the front row. They are on either side of the aisles up front and Jones's first reaction is to run, but he tries to stay cool—they're just teenagers and probably harmless. Hah!

The movie's just getting good too.

Within fifteen minutes it's obvious the thugs are for real and are divided into two factions.

During a tumultuous shootout scene on-screen, a fight breaks out in the front of the theatre and large, shiny guns are aimed by two teen gangsters. They're probably just frontin' and facin' each other — guns in New Orleans are as common as Clam Chowder in New England, only easier to buy.

Amazingly, the whole half-filled theatre goes completely quiet. The punks know they have the place in a grip.

Suddenly, they start waving the guns left and right across the audience — getting their kicks. No one even leaves their seats — you would think that there would be a mad rush for the exits but no — not in NOLA.

Jones is freaking out and Cucina is certain they will never see the outside of the theatre or sunlight ever again.

The extra large gatts are close enough to reach out and touch — they crouch in their seats immobilized by fear.

After having put a chill on the audience, the punks go back to arguing about crack or something and half of them get up abruptly walking up the aisle past sitting statues of frozen fear.

The other faction settles back down in the front row on either side of the aisle.

For a second Jones thinks that the trouble is past; then, a ka-chunk, ka-chunk, ka-chunk sound comes from the two thugs sitting on either side of the front row aisle seats.

"They're loading bullets into automatic weapon magazines. Baby, we gotta boot it outta here before

continued

they get done loading because some serious shit's about to go down!" Jones whispers to the spasmodically shivering Cucina.

She says, "How come nobody else is leaving Jonesy?"

He has no answer but grabs her bloated hand and kisses it — maybe for the last time.

"WE MUST MAKE IT TO THE LOBBY, OR WE'RE GOING TO DIE RIGHT HERE IN OUR SEATS."

"When I squeeze your hand hard I want you to immediately and silently get up and walk as fast as you can without running. We must make it to the lobby or we're gonna die right here in our seats."

He squeezes and they walk faster than any four hundred pounders you'll ever see. The odyssey up to the lobby seemed in slow motion to them and they heard people in the crowd mumbling. "They're leaving, maybe we should too!"

Still no one else moves and the ka-chunking noise is replaced by the thumping sound of two fleet footed thugs pouncing their way over the ragged carpeting of the aisle toward the fleeing couple. One of them is addressing Jones in a tremulous voice meant to intimidate.

Hey ma'an!

Hey MAN!

Jones tells Cucina to not look back at what surely is a loaded automatic killing in store for them.

Somehow they manage to make it up and out to the lobby, but instead of being greeted by the reality jarring neon lights and bustling employees, including armed security guards, they find darkness only broken by the low blinking lights of the pinball machines. No guards in sight—in fact, the only people in the lobby are the other gangsters that had been arguing in the theatre earlier. It all comes clear to Jones now. Perhaps they went to reload in the lobby while the others stayed in the

theatre to load bullets in hopes of having a real good killing party. No patrons allowed out the front or back.

The two warbly-voiced assassins behind Jones and Cucina suddenly remember they have bigger fish to fry when they see their rival gang.

Astonishingly, the lard-laden couple successfully runs through the gauntlet of heavily armed youths who are suddenly only aware of their hate for each other — even though they're all practically related.

Bursting and blubbering through front door freedom — completely incredulous to the fact that they're actually outta there alive, they run their fat hot dog-sculpted asses off to the wide-bucket safety of their Lincoln Navigator. As they run, streaming tears of joy and fear behind them, they come across a few people on their way toward the murder zone.

Without stopping their heart-pounding ramble into their personal end zone, they wave furiously at the ignorant people and manage to blurt only, "Guns! Shooting!! Theatre!!!"

The people pick up the message just as the crackle of automatic 9-mm shots ring out.

The Navigator squeals its way toward the safety of the better side of town, just as the grotesque rollercoaster screams of the doomed echo throughout the crumbling Cineplex.

"Why were the lights off and why the fuck weren't there any guards around on a Saturday night!! Damn!"

As they got near the highway, emergency vehicles of all kinds wailed by and Jones and Cucina knew that tonight they got as lucky as they would ever get.

The first thing those tea-toting, pork-swallowing survivors did when they got back to the relative safety of their renovated slave quarters in the View Carre was to buy an overshaped bottle of brandy and several six packs of Blackened Voodoo beer.

They made a pact to always pay full price and
eat their weenies at concession stands.

████████████████████

“THEY MADE A PACT TO ALWAYS
PAY FULL PRICE AND EAT THEIR
WEENIES AT CONCESSION STANDS.”

After showering the acid stick of fear off, they
got plastered and did what even very large
people do.

The pitiful part of all this, is that the police, in
collusion with the media, decided that it would be
best if the news of the slaughter of more than a
dozen movie goers was suppressed to avoid a
general panic.

Within two months, the Meadowbrook Theatre
tripled their prices and the guards were kept on
duty in a fully lighted facility that Jonesey and
Cucina never returned to.

Paris Mariano

Moon Breath

Staring into the water's silky skin
I wave my hand over my
moonlit reflection
as the lake shivers with anticipation,
all the while—
blaming it on the wind.

Crickets sing
as the trees bend
and the moon blinks twice,
no ... three times,
and I'm asleep.

Angela Hartmann



Wilda Méndez

Grandma Downstairs

broken window empty chair
face of kindness once sat there
gentle lady where are you
left me chasing paper moons
in your arms the dream sublime
stolen by the villain time
i kept searching while you slept
the child grew and Heaven wept
fallen painting hollow words
fairy tales were all i heard
ever after wasn't long
i believed but you were gone
the cloak of innocence i wore
was traded for a shining sword
cut through days of failing light
keeping faith but losing sight

Dan Copeland

Consumed by Guilt

The deadness creeps inside me, my anger overflows,
The passion builds within me, the fear inside me grows,
The room becomes all silent, a pin drop you can hear,
Until I wake and find myself covered in all my fears,
I want to hide my sorrow, but sorrow finds me out,
I want to scream I want to cry I want to run and shout,
The guilt that has consumed me is more then I can take,
I wish that I am dreaming but know I am awake,
I know there's nothing that can be done to ease away this pain,
But I knew what I was doing, and I did it all the same.

Rebekah Simpson



Ben Laing



The Thin Men

They are the thin men;
Emaciated as the Jews of Auschwitz.
Their lives hanging by threads from
The relentless medication,
Overflowing through the veins.

They are too often talked about, gawked at—
We always see them as dirty.
Look at them
On the gray television screens,
Shrinking into their skeletons.

Look at him! Look at him
With his lesions and sunken-in eyes,
Crying out for the kicking lovers
Playing Russian roulette
With the lives of my brothers.

The pain is inexorable!
There is too much fear,
I fear myself
I'm in a fright my light
Will deplete amongst all that darkness.

They are only on the television, we think,
it is only there
That the filthiness can spread out
Like tentacles of an octopus.
Only the devil can feed the demon.

They have found their message though.
In thinness, to come, later,
Into our homes,
When their plague is not viciousness,
Not guns, not bombs,

But a thin dead silence,
Hazing over us when we approach
The caskets of cadavers of the thinness
Eating away the grimness of opinions,
Of laughter—

Empty of complaint, they wear
The insufferable “scarlet-letter” of
The sinning anathema,
But it's not upon their clothing
So they leave us with the thought—

We owe nothing more to them than pity,
Even though the thinness is creeping
Into our families
Faster than Hiroshima ash
Made history.

The, red thorny rose is beautiful.
But if careless,
You could be infected with a prick,
And then the trickle
Of the blood,

The catalyst of the abyss,
The viciousness begins its swimming race,
And then the flood,
The flood.
The Inundation of the Fuchsia

Squeezing the life from blood cells
Of the Ivory.
The beginning of the ending,
The sin, the sin.

Eric S. Perkins



Maiko Tomatsu

First of all are you on time?
Have you prepared yourself for everything?
Are you aware that this is going to be hard?
Do you conceive of the incessant hours you
Will have to dedicate to achieve perfection?

Are you interested, will you learn from it—
I was a beginner once, back when the snow fell hard
Upon the gray intertwining bricks of a cold past.
It was too easy then.
Nothing could have got in my way.

I was clean, fresh, had all the right clothes,
Questions, and answers.
Now, my brain is filling with millions of
Cognizant tentacles resonating all ends.
I am through with this learning—

Every angle seems to lean me into a direction
That sways me from my original course.
In the month where freshman start their frontier,
I ascend to the red eye of morning.
I remember my first year,

Eyes wide and black.
I would enter class wiping my lips
From bitter coffee, feeling relieved
From the last drag of nicotine I'd inhaled.
My redundant routine—

Now I enter as an older learner,
I am not yet finished with school, and nowhere
Near a degree that I hope for, but still I reside
In this infinitesimal brick building, in the middle of nowhere.
To hell with academics,

How will I lose myself in physics—
There is no need for regrets now,
The moon is coming. I can feel her
Great 0 mouth coming on strong as an illness,
Ready to swallow.

If I am a little person, I do no harm.
If I use everything I have learned,
I upset conformed fascists.
According to Shakespeare: "Nothing is bad
Or good but thinking makes it so."

The gray-mica eyes of Gods surround me,
I am in a panic I might burst
Or explode from the seams,
Plying my way through the flesh of this blood bag.
The countenance of an onlooker turns horror red!

My head lives inside the roves of parchment.
I am sick to death of currency,
How it separates the weak from the strong!
All around me fat gold watches
Are telling the time of class.

Will you learn from it?

Eric S. Perkins

As I walk about my yard
I hear the echoes of memories past
Of my children then young
Playing in the sandbox
Which my husband built
Happy, happy, happy voices still
As I walk through the open field
I remember still
The sound of my son's dirtbike
Running, running, running still

As I turn the corner of my yard
I see the maple trees still
Which we planted
The day that they were born
The leaves resting on the breezes on the wind
Resting, resting, resting still

As I approach the front of the yard
I remember still
The sounds of happiness
While having a picnic there
The echoes of laughter, laughter still

As I walk around the corner still
I see the hidden Easter eggs
The sound of voices
Hurrying, hurrying, to find them
I hear their voices still

As I walk though my garden
I remember still
The pictures taken of graduations
Of accomplishments fulfilled

As I leave my yard
To walk in a yard of sorts
I come to a quiet place
Quiet, quiet, quiet still
A place of sorrow
A place of unspeakable grief
Sorrow, sorrow, sorrow still
Missing, missing, missing
His laughter, laughter, laughter still

Nancy Ward

A Parking Lot Awakening

Fall: a gift for eyes
Held annually—same place same time
A mixture of colors—fierce in its genius
Damming the painter's brush — teasing the poet's pen
Leaving itself
Open
Untouchable
But all embracing— if you let it
A beauty not to be complicated or contemplated
Only felt for its short existence
Before falling
Into the breast of winter

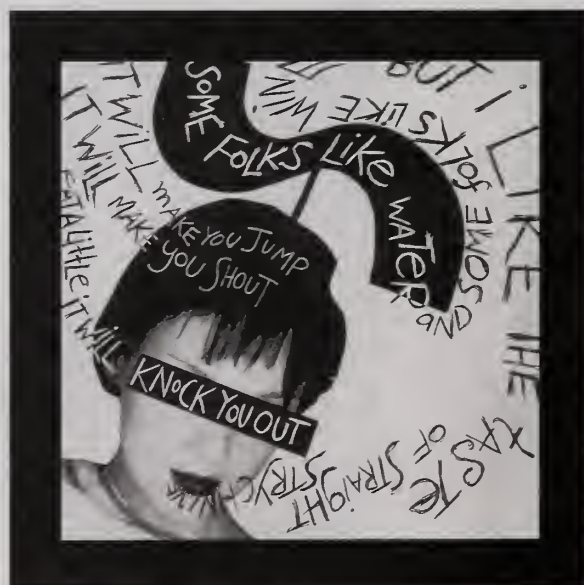
Anonymous D.P.T.



Mike A. C. Teckman



Stephanie Smiszek



Rebecca Romasco



Daffodils and Tranquilizers

Perils are a continuity, like rockets doomed
to still
Uplifted by her foggy escape, and sedated by its thrill...
She kisses at a rainbow that isn't really there
She's whispering to shadows, riding life without
a spare.
Cased in an evolution, backwards and upside down
Laughing with the vampires, she's just a sprinkle
in this town.
She's single, forever fastened to her tightly sorry
skin
That blocks the crying touch, oh, to peel away
her sins.
Moonchild, what zest she peppers, perturbed
as in may be
Fumbling genius, that she is, but that she could
not see.
She dreams of childhood smells, of love and
ladybugs
Of tall grass, of crooked brooks, of Daddy's smokey
hugs
Awake, she knows not where she is, or where she
may belong
So she loses herself, escaping it, in her melody
of wrong
Then, in a woken sleep, she saw the girl,
from another day
The girl with the hope of a wishing well, who'd
been tucked so far away
And even in this lost girl's low, her hope smiled
like a starry night
As she watched this girl, she remembered how
rainbows were born to light
The little girl twirled and grinned, inviting her to
dance
And as their motion melted into one, she was
given a second chance.

Anonymous



Melissa Hannay

Society's Contribution

just look at her
filthy with sin
barely dressed
and sickly thin
yes I know she's
just a child
give the poor homeless
child your coat
because it's too cold
to give her mine

Angela Hartmann

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